

## Summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 11 April 2023

1. Date of publication of this summary: 11 April 2023
2. Deadline for requests for call-in (detailing reasons for doing so): 18 April 2023
3. Earliest date for implementation of decisions: 19 April 2023
4. Urgent decisions taken and not subject to the call-in procedure: 11 April 2023

<b>Agenda Item and Recommendations</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<p><b>Agenda Item 2 Minutes</b></p> <p>To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 March 2023.</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 6 Planning Advisory Service - Planning Peer Review</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Noted the finding and recommendations of the PAS Peer Review (Appendix A)</li> <li>b) Endorsed the Action Plan and the next steps for the Planning Service (Appendix B) and;</li> <li>c) Agreed the proposed mechanism for monitoring and reporting progress on the Action Plan and transformation programme.</li> </ol> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To align with the recommendations proposed by the PAS Peer Review.</li> <li>• To ensure corporate support to drive positive change and will ensure the proposed measures are embedded within the Planning Service in the short, medium and long term.</li> <li>• To ensure accountability and ownership for the implementation of the Action Plan and transformation programme and;</li> <li>• It represents a positive opportunity to</li> </ul>

shape a new, fit for purpose unitary planning service for West Northamptonshire.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:**

Should the Council not progress the areas identified by the Planning Advisory Service, the Council will not benefits to improvements set out within the report.

**Agenda Item 7  
Community Grants Framework**

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet

- a) Approved the proposed Community Funding Grants Framework for West Northamptonshire Council for implementation from 2023/24.
- b) Approved the composition of the Community Funding Panel and the role of the Cross-party Advisory Group.

**REASONS RESOLVED:**

- Following Vesting Day, the Council has had in place an interim Community Funding Grants Policy approved by Cabinet for use until March 2023. This Policy was for the operation of a single grant scheme that combined the district and borough councils' legacy community funding grants and budgets into a single WNC Community Funding Grant Scheme.
- Over the past two years, it has become apparent that our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) have had different expectations and understandings of the use and purpose of this now single grant. There has also been other funding made available to these voluntary and community organisations, which while a welcome investment in prevention, has been aligned to the interim Community Funding Grant Policy without a clear remit from Cabinet.
- There is now the opportunity to align all community funding into a single framework that will embrace current and future community funding grant awards. This will standardise the approach across the Council and ensure a fair, accessible, open and transparent process. Therefore,

Cabinet approval is sought to enable Officers to launch the Community Funding Grants Framework and for this to be applied to community funding that voluntary and community organisations can apply for going forward.

- The recommendation to implement a Community Funding Grants Framework will provide a consistent approach to the grant awards made by the Council and make it clear what the expectations of the Council are for projects to be considered for funding via a set of principles and standards. These principles and standards apply to both the VCS and to any Officers considering funding requests.
- The Community Funding Grants Framework will enable the Council to take a more strategic and targeted approach to grant funding investment into the VCS , ensuring that all awards are aligned to meet identified needs and the Councils corporate priorities.
- The level of grants to a voluntary or community organisation under this proposal will fall below the Council's Scheme of Delegation limits for Officers No grant award will therefore be classified as a Key Decision of the Council.
- The Cabinet, on approval of the Community Funding Grants Framework, will have determined the strategic direction of all community funding to the VCS which will be tracked and reported to members periodically to ensure transparency for all stakeholders.
- The recommendation to approve the composition and ongoing role of the Cross-party Advisory Group extends their advisory role into all future Community Funding Grant Schemes.

#### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Continuing without a Community Funding Grants Framework. This model would see decision making and awarding of community funding implemented on a Directorate / Departmental basis across

	<p>the Council with little coordination. This option is not recommended for reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there will be different funding policies, principles and standards applied to these grants;</li> <li>• there will be an increased risk of challenge due to inconsistencies of officer decision making without a framework being in place;</li> <li>• risk of duplicating funding to organisations and/or projects; and</li> <li>• inconsistency for ensuring these grants address the Council's corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities.</li> </ul> <p>Not to approve the proposed Community Funding Grants Framework. This would lead to the Council having no mechanism to guide community funding grant awards, therefore having a detrimental effect on the consistency and quality of our decision making which is likely to be detrimental to the VCS and residents of West Northamptonshire.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 8 Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Approved the Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy v2 (attached to the report as Appendix A)</li> <li>b) Delegated to the Head of Private Sector Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Culture and Leisure; the responsibility to maintain the policy and make any minor amendments in light of legislative changes, Court or Tribunal decision, or identified typographic error.</li> </ol> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective</li> <li>• To support compliance with legislation and Council policy.</li> <li>• To support consistency with previous decisions of the Council in adopting the Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy v1 in April 2021, as part of the vesting day activities of West Northamptonshire</li> </ul>

	<p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that the Council maintains its policies in line with legislative, Court or Tribunal decisions</li> </ul> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>Cabinet can choose not to approve the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy (Appendix A). This option is not recommended because the existing Policy was approved in April 2020 and requires updating as a result of changes to the Council's approach to fees and charges, updated legislation, case law and government guidance.</p> <p>The absence of an up to date Policy will hamper the Council's efforts to improve everyone's understanding of its housing enforcement process and what action the Council will take and when.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 9</b>  <b>Replacement of existing contract for WNC's main Housing Management System 'OpenHousing'</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet authorised the Chief Information Officer to award a contract to Capita for the use of the OpenHousing housing management system, via the KCS framework (Y20023), for three years with the option of extension for a single year.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure continuity of service to the delivery of the Council's housing service</li> <li>• To enable the Council to conduct a comprehensive contracting process for a replacement system within the life of the proposed contract.</li> </ul> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>The alternative is to end the contract with Capita or extend it for a shorter period and immediately procure an alternative system. This option will mean that the Council is unable to deliver its core statutory functions. Capita has made it clear that it will not agree to a shorter contract. This means that the Council has no option at this stage but to accept the terms and</p>

	<p>conditions available which requires to enter into a contract with Capita.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 10</b>  <b>A43 Northampton - Kettering</b>  <b>Improvements Phase 3</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <p>a) Noted the progress made to date in undertaking improvements to the A43 between Northampton and Kettering.</p> <p>b) Agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Economy to agree the joint working arrangements with North Northamptonshire Council, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Finance.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:  The proposed option for a Memorandum of Understanding ensures that the two Councils share the governance of the scheme and a fair distribution of the costs of developing this cross-border highway scheme.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:  Alternative options which have been considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For one Council to construct the project completely at its cost. It is unlikely that either Council would wish to spend its funds on an improvement in the other Council's area in this way.</li> <li>• For each Council to construct its section of the road separately. This would not be efficient and would create a risk that the timescales did not align at the point where the road crossed the boundary. Such lack of co-operation would also be unlikely to secure funding from the Department for Transport.</li> <li>• To construct the road only in one Council's area or to not progress the scheme at all. Neither of these options would address the dual problems of increasing road capacity to accommodate development in West Northamptonshire and existing capacity problem at the Holcot/Sywell roundabout in North Northamptonshire.</li> </ul> <p>None of these options is recommended.</p>

**Agenda Item 11  
2023/24 Bus Subsidy Budget**

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Agreed the use of £215k from the contingency fund in 2023/24 to provide continuing support for non-commercially viable bus services.
- b) Noted that this will be used to continue to support the services currently receiving financial support.

REASONS RESOLVED:

To ensure the Council is fulfilling its statutory duty to secure provision of appropriate services to meet public transport requirements, and to enable the council to take more time to evaluate these requirements in advance of a longer term recommendation being made.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Alternative options which have been considered include:

- Retaining just the base budget and cutting the subsidised services to fit the available budget. It is important that the Council assesses the impact of any withdrawal of funding support on service levels, as this could leave some communities with an established public transport requirement without any service at all.
- Agreeing a permanent uplift to the base budget. Any decision on the longer term budget allocation should be informed by bus service review currently underway, with a decision taken on a budget allocation to deliver the preferred service delivery option guided by a fuller impact assessment. Furthermore, continuing to simply support existing bus services which are in financial difficulty only provides a short-term solution and it is difficult to identify which services to prioritise for support

**Agenda Item 12  
Local Government and Social Care  
Ombudsman Report**

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the findings of the report and considered the public interest that may be generated by the publication of the report.

REASONS RESOLVED:

- The Council is required to consider the

report and confirm within three months the action it has taken to respond to the findings and recommendations.

- Under the Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended, the Council is required to share the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and evidence this to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- In addition, Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 5 requires that the Monitoring Officer of a Local Authority prepares a report to the Authority with respect to any cases where maladministration or failure has been found.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:**

Where fault has resulted in a loss of educational provision, the Ombudsman's guidance recommends a remedy payment of between £200 and £600 a month to acknowledge the impact of that loss. The figure should be based on the impact on the child and take account of factors such as:

- the severity of the child's SEN;
- any educational provision – full-time or part-time, without some or all of the specified support – that was made during the period;
- whether additional provision now can remedy some or all of the loss;
- whether the period affected was a significant one in a child's school career – for example, the first year of compulsory education, the transfer to secondary school, or the period preparing for public exams

A further 8 complaints have been identified as qualifying for the above, and the Education service are currently working through assessing the financial impact of remedying these.

<p><b>Agenda Item 13 SACRE Annual Report</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet received and approved the SACRE annual report.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p>
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	<p>After being accepted by the Council the report will be published to schools. Schools will take note of the advice given in the report and act on it in order to improve the quality of provision for RE and collective worship.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: The report is for information only.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 14</b> <b>Consolidating printers into a single contract</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet delegated authority to the Executive Director – Corporate Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for Corporate Services to progress and enter into a single contract for the provision of multi functional devices.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contracts inherited by WNC from its predecessor councils are expiring and so need to be renewed to enable continued provision and support of MFDs in its offices.</li><li>• Current providers will ultimately cease support for our existing MFD machines, so replacements must be sought and in-place before this support ceases to ensure service continuity.</li><li>• Re-procuring as a single contract will be key to enabling printing to be made seamless across any location in the Council area, creating the ability for any worker to print anywhere at any machine.</li><li>• A framework contract is proposed for the contract re-procurement as it offers a more efficient and cost-effective process.</li><li>• New MFDs typically have a six-month lead time and so awarding the contract promptly will provide the council with maximum flexibility in transitioning from current contract arrangements.</li></ul> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: The most common method for organisations is to Lease-Hire the machines. This would mean a tie-in to pay the awarded company the value of the machines over a typical five-year period. The only draw-back here is that this approach raises demand on the revenue</p>

	<p>cost and the organisation will not own the machines at the end of the contract.</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 15</b> <b>Consolidating phone lines into a single contract</b></p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet</p> <p>a) Agreed to the Chief Information Officer carrying out a procurement process to select a new provider; and</p> <p>b) Authorised the Chief Information Officer to award the contract for a period of up to 5 years to the successful bidder on completion of the procurement process.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consolidation of the Council’s landline infrastructure into a single contract will lead to budget savings as we leverage economies of scale.</li><li>• The UK is shutting down analogue phone services by 2025, known as the “Big Analogue Switch Off”. The Council currently has many analogue telephone lines that will need to be migrated to a digital service to maintain business requirements, rendering existing contracts inappropriate.</li><li>• Consolidation of contracts simplifies administration and account management, reducing staff time and overheads in managing our telephony and is also expected to lead to a reduction in the number of landlines.</li></ul> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>There are multiple telecoms suppliers providing landline services to the Council which is inefficient from a cost perspective and adds an administrative overhead for staff in terms of management as well as processing invoices and purchase orders.</p> <p>A project to consolidate all the landlines with one supplier would drive cost savings through economies of scale, significantly reduce the administrative burden and ensure full alignment of contract dates. It is also expected that through the consolidation work a rationalisation, resulting in the number of landlines, would take place. For the reasons above, the option to consolidate landlines is the preferred choice.</p>

Existing running costs are a combined cost (rental and call charges) of £150k per year and it is expected that this will reduce by 15% to a cost of £127.5k per year following migration.